
December / January Farm & Market Report

December 13, 2016

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COMMISSIONER'S COLUMN



Greetings, Friends of Massachusetts Agriculture!

Let's begin this column with some unabashedly great news. We have some Mass. Agricultural High School students who have won a Future Farmers of America (FFA) National Championship!!!

According to a Bristol Aggie press release, "Alexandra Bettencourt (Raynham), Molly Ross (Rochester), Bridgette Roy (Rehoboth), and Jacqueline Poplawski (Norton) of Bristol County Agricultural High School earned the 2016 FFA National Championship in Veterinary Science. The team was coached by Animal Science Department Chair and Bristol County Agricultural High School Alumna, Leslie Blanchette. Alexandra placed 1st overall out of 196 students representing 49 states. This is the first time in the history of

Massachusetts that an FFA team has earned National Championship status. All students at Bristol County Agricultural High School are provided membership in the FFA organization as part of their enrollment." The press release may be [viewed here](#).

I first visited Bristol Aggie just a couple weeks after I became Commissioner and was very impressed with the pervasive energy, excitement and enthusiasm I found there in the pursuit of agricultural educational excellence. What a great achievement by Alexandra (extra recognition for placing 1st individually!), Molly, Bridgette (5th individually!), and Jacqueline! Congratulations, all of Mass. Agriculture is extremely proud of you!

And let's not also fail to recognize all those whose collective good work creates that positive learning environment: Coach Leslie Blanchette and her fellow Bristol Aggie faculty, its staff, administration, students, and the Board of Trustees, all of whom work together to advance Bristol Aggie's mission.

Moving along, I want to make sure all commercial agricultural businesses are aware that MDAR recently announced a brand-new grant program within our Agricultural Environmental Enhancement Program (AEEP) particularly designed to support water conservation projects that will help farmers deal

with drought conditions. The Drought Agricultural Environmental Enhancement Program opened November 30th, and responses are due by January 6, 2017. Learn more at www.mass.gov/eea/docs/agr/programs/aeep/aeep-drought.pdf. MDAR continues to participate as a member of the state's Drought Management Task Force (www.mass.gov/eea/waste-mgmt-recycling/water-resources/preserving-water-resources/partners-and-agencies/water-resources-commission/drought-management-task-force.html) which collects and analyzes data and makes recommendations to senior policy makers. I prefer to attend these meetings personally as I think it's very important that I continue to highlight to the Task Force how a drought and any related policy decisions affect the families that make their livings by means of Mass. Agriculture.

Like any organization, MDAR experiences the full range of personnel changes. Employees are hired, retire, take leaves, and separate. I don't share all the various comings and goings with you (maybe I should do that more), but I do think it's always important to report changes at the senior staff level.

Accordingly, please know that MDAR General Counsel Tara Zadeh is leaving the agency at year's end. I thank her for all her hard work, and for the advice and counsel she has provided the department since Commissioner Watson appointed her as its lead attorney. Everyone at MDAR wishes Tara very good fortune in her future endeavors.

I have nothing to announce now relative to an appointment of a new General Counsel other than to report that I am reviewing my options.

There are a few events and activities since my last column that I want to call to your attention:

- The Baker-Polito Administration announced over \$900,000 in grants from the new Massachusetts Food Ventures Program (MFVP) which MDAR administers. It was an honor to have Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito lead the announcement event on October 20th at MFVP grant recipient Nuestras Raices in Holyoke. The program is designed to provide benefit at multiple levels. At the consumer level, it will provide greater access to locally grown food, particularly in communities of low- or moderate-income; it encourages job creation and entrepreneurship; and lastly, it greatly improves post-harvest opportunities for farmers. For more information about MFVP, the recent awardees and their projects, please see www.mass.gov/eea/pr-2016/920000-awarded-to-local-food-ventures.html.
- At its November 10th meeting, the Mass. Food Policy Council www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/boards-commissions/food-policy-council.html voted its six highest priorities based on the recommendations of the Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan. The Council determined these six priorities to declare to all interested parties the initial actions that it suggests be taken. The six priorities are:
 1. Support programs that facilitate access to healthy foods for underserved communities.
 2. Reduce food waste through state programs for farmers, restaurants, processors, schools and other institutions, and consumers.
 3. Support regulatory policies and practices that allow farms and other food system businesses to thrive.
 4. Support and grow local food system infrastructure.
 5. Support increased purchases of Massachusetts grown and produced foods.
 6. Support educational opportunities for farmers and other food system workers.
- As part of our ongoing outreach and education efforts, I joined with our Division of Agricultural Conservation and Technical Assistance staff to discuss and hear concerns about the Agricultural Preservation Restriction program and related regulations with stakeholders at both the Community Harvest Project at Brigham Hill Community Farm in North Grafton and again at Mass. Farm Bureau's Annual Meeting in Peabody.
- As I mention frequently, I find it extremely important to get out of the office to meet with the department's diverse stakeholders. In the last couple months, I attended the Mass. Agricultural Fairs Association Annual Meeting in Sturbridge; Elementary schools in Worcester, Holyoke, Chicopee and UMass Amherst on National Food Day, at each taking part in the Apple Crunch; Congresswoman Tsongas's Agricultural Roundtable in Marlborough; the Southern New England Livestock Conference in Dighton; the Western Mass. Food Processing Center's 15th Anniversary in Greenfield; the Green Friday Annual Christmas Tree Cutting in East Bridgewater; Mass. Farm Bureau Federation's Annual Meeting in Peabody; and New England Grows in Boston.
- With the passage of Ballot Question #4, the department is receiving numerous inquiries from parties interested in growing marijuana or hemp. The ballot question assigned authority over legalized recreational marijuana and hemp to the State Treasurer's Office. We are referring all inquiries to that office. State Treasurer Deborah B. Goldberg has established a webpage at www.mass.gov/treasury/marijuana/. It contains a link to a Frequently Asked Questions page that will grow over time as the Treasurer's Office develops its program. MDAR's Pesticide Program does have responsibilities for pesticide use on medical and recreational marijuana, no differently than its general responsibilities.

I started this column with very good news. I'm afraid my last note is exactly the opposite. Former MDAR Assistant Commissioner and Chief of Staff Kent Lage died unexpectedly Wednesday, December 7th. Kent was a great friend and advocate for all things agricultural. He served with Commissioners Healy and Gillespie, and for a short time with Commissioner Petersen. I had the opportunity to get to know Kent from my service on the Board of Food and Agriculture, and always found him to be a wise and creative thinker who was always advancing agriculture. He gave me valuable advice for which I will always be grateful that I sought from him while I was preparing to become Commissioner. MDAR extends its deepest sympathy to his wife Tami and all his family. Kent's obituary may be viewed at www.rossfuneral.com/notices/Kent-Lage.

In closing, on behalf of everyone at MDAR, I wish you and your family a wonderful holiday season and a Happy and Healthy New Year!



Energy News

EEA/DOER/MDAR Announce AgEnergy and AgEnergy Special Projects Grant Awards

39 grants were awarded recently through two separate MDAR Energy grant programs to local farms throughout the Commonwealth totaling \$817,659. Since 2009, the Ag-Energy Grant Program has funded agricultural energy projects through the [Agricultural Energy Grant Program](#) (Ag-Energy) and the [Agricultural Energy Special Project Grant Program](#) (ENER-SP), to improve efficiency and support alternative clean energy technologies. Additionally, 2016 is the first year the ENER-SP Grant Program is being offered and targets special projects that will assist farms to become more sustainable. Both programs received significant financial support from DOER. [Press release here.](#)

MA Farm Energy Program - Energy Audits – Now is a great time!

The Massachusetts Farm Energy Program has funds to help farms cover audits, energy efficient projects, and select renewable energy projects.

Contact for more information: 413-727-3090, info@massfarmenergy.com, or visit www.massfarmenergy.com, submit a “Request Form.”

MA Farm Energy Program REAP Application Assistance

Need help preparing your REAP application? The Massachusetts Farm Energy Program is able to provide it! Our program recently received a grant to help farms prepare their REAP applications, at no cost. But don't wait until the deadline approaches; REAP applications can be submitted any time, so contact us now! Next REAP application deadline is March 31, 2017 for all projects sizes and requests.

DOER Developing New Solar Incentive Program

(Below from DOER website – www.mass.gov/doer)

The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) is in the process of designing a new solar incentive program pursuant to [Chapter 75 of the Acts of 2016 signed into law by Governor Baker on April 11, 2016](#). DOER is working to create a long-term sustainable solar incentive program to promote cost-effective solar development in the Commonwealth and this page is designed to provide an overview of past and planned public meetings, relevant documents, presentations, and reports related to the new program.

As the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) is in the process of designing a new solar incentive program pursuant to Chapter 75 of the Acts of 2016. DOER is working to create a long-term sustainable solar incentive program to promote cost-effective solar development in the Commonwealth.

With this effort, DOER conducted two public listening sessions to receive verbal and written comments on the development of the next solar incentive. The public comments received through June 30, 2016 can be viewed in the file below.

[Post 1600 MW Solar Program Development Comments](#) (file size 15MB)

On September 23, 2016, DOER presented its vision for the next generation of solar incentives to the public. The meeting took place at the Federal Reserve Building. Over the next couple of months, DOER will continue to engage with stakeholders in working towards the final design of the program. A copy of the presentation can be found below, as well as a link to an audio recording of the meeting.

- [Next Generation Incentive Straw Proposal](#)
- [September 23, 2016 Meeting](#) (file size 154MB)

DOER will be accepting written comments on the proposed program design until October 28, 2016. Please submit all comments via email to DOER.SREC@state.ma.us. To stay up to date on the development of this program, please sign up for our Solar PV Contact email list, by filling out the form found through this [page](#).

Baker-Polito Administration Expands Grants for Clean Heating and Cooling Systems (From EEA September 29, 2016 Press Release)

The Baker-Polito Administration, in conjunction with the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC), recently announced the launch of a package of programs that will provide grants of up to \$250,000 for large, commercial-scale clean heating and cooling systems. The new programs, www.masscec.com/business/clean-heating-and-cooling, which complement the rebates already available for single-family homes, apartments, and condominiums, will allow businesses, nonprofits, government entities and multi-family residential facilities across the Commonwealth to be eligible for rebates up to \$250,000 for biomass heating and ground-source heat pump projects and \$225,000 for air-source pump projects. For more information, please visit the above Mass Clean Energy website.

For more information on any of the above articles, please feel free to contact Gerry Palano, Energy Coordinator, MDAR, 617-626-1706, Gerald.Palano@state.ma.us.

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Drought Funding for Water Conservation Projects – Reminder Deadline January 6

Recognizing the hardship that farms throughout the Commonwealth have faced during the 2016 growing season due to unprecedented drought conditions, Governor Charlie Baker and Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito announced additional grant funding for water conservation projects to be released through the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR).

MDAR will administer \$250,000 of grant funding through its Agricultural Environmental Enhancement Program (AEEP) for water conservation projects that help farms reduce their operational impact on the environment and better prepare for, and recover after, this years' severe drought. Selected proposals will be reimbursed up to \$25,000 or 85% of total project costs of approved projects.

Agricultural operations interested in applying will need to submit their Request for Response (RFR) by 4:00pm on January 6, 2017. For a copy of the application, [visit the AEEP website](#) (right column) or call 617-626-1739.

Vendors Invited to Attend Local Specialty Crop Trade Show & Local Food Trade Show

The Sustainable Business Network of Massachusetts (SBN) is offering their 6th Local Food Trade Shows on Wednesday, March 1, 2017, at Northeastern University, Boston, MA.

The 2016 Local Food Trade Shows are designed to facilitate connections and stimulate business relationships between producers and wholesale buyers of local food, with a focus on specialty crop food products in Massachusetts. This event is ideal for restaurants, retailers and institutional buyers interested in trading with local food suppliers and who desire to buy more locally produced products from growers, fishermen, and value added producers from Massachusetts and New England. The Local Specialty Crop Trade Show Presented by MDAR (MassGrown). Exhibitors will include New England based farmers, produce distributors and local specialty crop producers (products made with 50% or more specialty crops also qualify). Please view the USDA definition of specialty crops here. This Trade Show is funded by the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant, sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. Exhibition booths are free for specialty crop farmers and producers-->[REGISTER HERE](#)

Local Food Trade Show - [This](#) trade show is open to all non-specialty crop food producers including meat and dairy farms, fisheries, baked goods and other added value producers.

Exhibition booths are \$125.00-->[REGISTER HERE](#)

The Trade Shows will include workshops offering best practice topics around some of the most pressing barriers to specialty crop sales in Massachusetts.

Who should attend? Any wholesale buyers, who are interested in purchasing Massachusetts or New England-produced food items. These buyers can be supermarkets, co-ops, restaurants, hotels, resorts, institutions, schools, food processors in search of ingredients, distributors, or anyone else interested in local purchasing options.

This event is intended for commercial buyers, not individual consumers. Buyers & Attendees --> [REGISTER HERE](#)

[Complete details here.](#)

Eight-Workshop Series: Mapping Out Your Farm's Future - Settings Goals for the Success and Sustainability of Your Farm

[CISA](#) invites you to join our eight-workshop series on Mapping Out Your Farm's Future: Settings Goals for the Success and Sustainability of Your Farm beginning January 2017. In order to draw a map of the future of your farm, you need a solid foundation with which to review your past and assess your present. This workshop series will support farm owners and operators in decision making for realistic long-term financial, operational, marketing, and personal goals. Examples in the workshops will be farm related, but the skills and methodology will be relevant to all businesses.

Participation in the whole series is encouraged. You will be eligible for a one-on-one consultation by attending one Business Plan workshop. Attending three workshops gives you the eligibility for an additional one-on-one consultation related to the topic of any workshop being held. Dinner will be served at each session. The cost to attend the series is \$90 for Local Hero members, or \$15 for each individual workshop. The non-member fee is \$110 for the series, or \$18 for each individual workshop. If cost is a barrier to your participation, please feel free to contact Stevie to discuss options as we want everyone to be able to get the training they need to effectively operate their business. Scholarships may be available.

- 1) *The Farm Business Plan: A Narrative for your Values, Goals, and Success* - January 25
- 2) *The Farm Business Plan: Making it Work for You* - February 1
- 3) *Growing People: Leadership from the Inside Out* - February 9
- 4) *Growing People: Constructive Conflict Resolution* - February 16
- 5) *Farm Financing: Credit, Capital, and Cash – Oh My!* - February 21
- 6) *To Diversify or Not to Diversify? And How?* - March 1
- 7) *Land Tenure: Alternatives to Ownership and Negotiating a Lease* - March 14
- 8) *Grant Essentials: Opportunities & Approaches* - March 22

Register online at buylocalfood.org or contact Stevie Schafenacker at stevie@buylocalfood.org, 413-665-7100. [Complete details on each workshop here.](#)

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For Startup Urban Farmers & Food Processors in Boston

[The Carrot Project](#) is excited to announce *Deepening Roots, Growing Success*, a business training program for current or aspiring Boston-based urban farmers and locally-sourced food processing business operators. The training program starts with a Saturday Intensive Crash Introduction to the world of growing, sourcing, and processing local foods. Local experts and business leaders will present on panel discussions for an introduction to the local food

landscape. Then, 8 Monday evening sessions will provide participants with in-depth business expertise to help launch and develop their business models, also presented by local experts and business leaders.

January 28, 2017 from 8:30 am-5:00 pm: Saturday Intensive Crash Introduction

January 30 - March 20, 2017 from 6:00 pm-9:00 pm: 8 Monday Evening Sessions - Hibernian Hall Ballroom and Conference Room, 184 Dudley Street, Roxbury, MA

[More information and full program, register here.](#)

2017 Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference and Trade Show

March 7 - 9, 2017 - Sturbridge Host Hotel, Sturbridge, Massachusetts – [Registration now open!](#)



The New England State Departments of Agriculture, in cooperation with agricultural organizations across the region, graciously invite you to attend. ***Turn Up the Volume on Your Farm Marketing!***

Keynote Speaker Craig Ostbo, Managing Partner, Koopman Ostbo, Portland, OR - Are you in Marketing? Isn't Everyone? Craig Ostbo challenges the perception that just because the title on your business card doesn't say "Marketing" that doesn't mean you are not in marketing – especially in today's digital world.

In addition to nearly 30 workshops over two days and a full trade show, the 2017 conference will include the following special events:

- March 7: Farm Tours: Two tours to choose from featuring some of the best farm marketers in the region.
- March 8 (8:00 am – 4:30 pm): The New England Farmers Market Managers Exchange: After attending the conference keynote session on marketing, farmers' market managers from New England will convene for educational workshops designed specifically for them.
- March 8 (drop in 9:00 am - 5:00 pm) & March 9 (drop in 7:30 am - 3:00 pm): The SNAP Resource Workshop, a drop-in information session where you can get your farm, farm stand or farmers' market authorized for SNAP (formerly food stamps) and receive your USDA FNS number the very same day! USDA staff will be on site to walk you through the process and assist with your application. Find out about wireless equipment options to process SNAP payments (as well as credit/debit) and learn about other resources available. If you intend on getting an FNS (SNAP) number, you will need to bring 3 pieces of documentation that will be listed in your Registration Confirmation email.

The conference is sponsored by all six New England State Departments of Agriculture and Harvest New England, in cooperation with agricultural associations from across the region, as well as assistance from the [USDA's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program](#). This unique marketing conference targets New England growers interested in learning new marketing ideas or fine-tuning strategies for business success. There will be multiple educational and networking opportunities.

[Register now for early registration savings.](#) Download the [Save the Date](#) and share with your friends.

Trade show information, [details here.](#)

Massachusetts Maple Syrup Producers Win Top Honors

One Massachusetts maple syrup producer took a top honor for her product and another was recognized for his decades of dedication to the industry at the North American Maple Syrup Council's annual competition, held this year in Burlington, Vermont.

Melissa Leab of Hancock, MA, won first place in the Maple Cream category, and further beat out all other entries to claim Best of Show among all Maple Products. Sugarmakers from the United States and Canada submitted 170 entries into the contest, making for very tough competition in each category. Leab and her husband Rob own and run [Ioka Valley Farm](#), and Melissa is also President of the Massachusetts Maple Producer Association. "It was an honor to hear that the judges felt that my maple cream stood out from all of the other excellent products," said Leab. "I'm proud to represent Massachusetts in this way – there are so many great sugarmakers in our state, making so much good pure maple syrup and other pure maple products."

Sugarmaker Tom McCrumm, owner and operator of [South Face Farm](#) in Ashfield, was chosen for inclusion in the American Maple Hall of Fame for his decades of commitment to supporting and promoting the maple industry. "It was a big surprise to be chosen for the American Maple Hall of Fame," said McCrumm. "After 45 years of involvement in the maple syrup industry it is a great honor to be among two of my mentors already in the Hall – Lew Staats from Cornell University, and Linwood Lesure from Ashfield, Massachusetts who built the sugarhouse which I now own."

The induction ceremony will be held at the American Maple Hall of Fame in May in Croghan, New York.

There are more than 250 maple sugaring operations in Massachusetts, many of which sell their products directly to consumers at farmstands and farmers markets. A directory of sugarmakers who sell maple products to the public can be found at www.massmaple.org. The 2016 sugaring season was record-setting, with Massachusetts maple producers made about 77,000 gallons of 100% pure maple syrup. The [Massachusetts Maple Producers Association](#) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and promotion of maple sugaring in Massachusetts.

Five Businesses Receive Massachusetts Sustainable Business of the Year Awards

At the recent second annual Sustainable Business of the Year Award, five businesses received Massachusetts Sustainable Business of the Year Awards by [SBN \(Sustainable Business Network of Boston\)](#) with three being food businesses. Business of the Year Awards were given to recognize the commitment of their businesses to building a more sustainable local economy.

Small Business | Eastern Massachusetts

[Allandale Farm's](#) mission is to grow the best vegetables using the cleanest, safest methods while preserving a farm located on the Jamaica Plain/Brookline border and is the last for-profit farm in Boston or Brookline. Allandale contributes time and profits to local community initiatives and nurtures many local food startups through their retail store.

Mid-Size Business | Western Massachusetts

[River Valley Co-op's](#) (RVC) mission is to support local farmers and provide the community with "fresh, local, and organically grown foods." RVC does business with over 200 local farms and over 240 local vendors and have increased their local wholesale purchasing to \$5.4 million since they opened in 2008. In 2015 RVC underwent building renovations and improved the buildings energy efficiency. RVC rewards customers that bike to the store and bring their own reusable bags!

Mid-Size Business | Eastern Massachusetts

[Red's Best's](#) mission is to support the livelihoods of American fisherman while sustaining fisheries for harvest. Sourcing from over 1,000 New England boats, Red's Best emphasizes the use of underutilized species, the expansion of local fisherfolk markets, especially in low-income communities, and the reduction of pressure on the local ocean ecosystem. Red's Best is reducing the environmental burden caused by importing fish by sourcing locally. Red's Best is dedicated to educating consumers on seasonality of fish and the benefits of local buying and fishing regulations.

Other awards:

Small Business | Western Massachusetts

[Pedal People Cooperative](#) is a worker-owned, human-powered delivery and hauling service in the Northampton area. Pedal People hauls and delivers using bicycles and trailers emitting zero waste from transportation. Additionally, the co-op is 100% worker-owned, mandates a maximum 2:1 pay ratio between the highest and lowest paid employee owners and receives the Living Wage Certification every year.

Large Business | MA

[Eastern Bank's](#) mission is to reduce their environmental impact by working cooperatively with all stakeholders to promote best practices, sponsoring and participating in educational outreach concerning environmental issues and continually developing and executing environmentally sustainable practices, products and services. Eastern Bank provides sustainable employee benefits including discounted MBTA passes, preferred parking for carpools, green dry cleaning and provides CSA shares at their operations center. Eastern Bank was the first bank to participate in SBN's Sustainable Business Leader Program and their 152,000 square foot headquarters is the largest certified building to date.

5th Annual Massachusetts Urban Farming Conference

Saturday March 4, 2017

7:45 am - 5:00 pm - Northeastern University Curry Student Center, 346 Huntington Ave, Boston



The 5th Annual Massachusetts Urban Farming Conference (UFC) is designed to advance the opportunities and address the barriers involved in cultivating a resilient and thriving Urban Farming sector. The 5th Annual Massachusetts UFC is comprised of interactive panels, demonstration workshops, expert discussions on diverse and relevant topics with distinguished conversation leaders and practitioners. The event always sells out! Early Bird Special, \$50, ends December 30, 2016.

[Register here.](#) For panel/workshop information, contact Rose Arruda at MDAR: Rose.Arruda@state.ma.us.

2017 Massachusetts Agriculture Calendar

Now available is the [2017 Massachusetts Agriculture Calendar](#)! Each year the Massachusetts agriculture calendar, *Celebrating the Seasons of Massachusetts Agriculture*, features winning photos from this year's public photo contest. Each photograph is selected that best spotlights crops and farms across the Commonwealth. Winning photos can be viewed [here](#). Each month also includes "Fun Facts" and "Teaching Tips," which makes this a great gift to a teacher!

The annual Calendar is produced in collaboration with [Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom \(MAC\)](#) and the [Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources](#), along with the many sponsoring associations: [MA Farm Bureau](#), [MA State Grange](#), [MA Fruit Growers](#), [MA Maple Association](#), [MA Fairs Association](#), [Cape Cod Cranberry Association](#), [MA Flower Growers Association](#), [MA Dairy Promotion Board](#), and the [MA Christmas Tree Association](#). Details and ordering information [here](#).



UPCOMING EVENTS/WORKSHOPS

- **December 14 - Disaster Assistance: Coping with Drought and Other Losses** - 5:30 - 8:00pm - CISA Office, One Sugarloaf Street, South Deerfield. - Join CISA's upcoming workshop on Disaster Assistance: Coping with Drought and Other Losses. This season has brought many unprecedented challenges for farms, from frosts and drought to a widespread beef recall. Your farm may be eligible for funding to help with pasture and livestock losses, damage to orchard and nursery plantings, irrigation, water conservation projects, digging wells, and more. Join us to learn about the financial assistance available to help farms cope with 2016 losses and plan for the future. This workshop will discuss the direct financial compensation for losses available through the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) disaster assistance programs; funding available from the USDA NRCS and MDAR; new insurance options like [Whole Farm Revenue Protection](#); and low-interest loan programs. James Newland and Darrin Vander Plas of FSA, Tom Smiarowski of UMass Extension, and Kevin McCarthy of Signal Rock AG Insurance will be on hand to discuss these programs and to meet one-on-one with growers seeking personal advice. Please RSVP to Kristen Wilmer at 413-665-7100, ext. 12. [Details here.](#)
- **December 20 - The Food Safety Modernization Act: How to Comply** - Farm Credit East to Host Informational Webinar from 11am – Noon. The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) represents a significant overhaul of our nation's food safety laws. With thousands of pages of regulation, more than a dozen rulemakings, at least 10 guidance documents, and a number of reports, standards and notices, FSMA can seem pretty intimidating. To help navigate the complicated terrain, Dr. Wesley Kline, of Rutgers Extension, will present a practical discussion of how FSMA regulations apply to growers of fresh produce, along with some tips on how to comply. Whether your farm is large or small, sells to wholesalers or direct-to-consumer, there will be information relevant to your operation. This webinar is open to all interested northeast farm-related businesses and is free to participate. To register, visit FarmCreditEast.com/webinars.
- **January 6 - The New England Vegetable and Berry Growers' Association & Cooperative Extension 593rd Growers' Meeting** – 9am – 4pm - Hadley Farms Meeting House, 41 Russell St. Sessions include: Alternative Control of Cabbage Aphid in Brussels Sprouts; What's New with Crop Insurance? Soil Health Assessments Managing Irrigation During Drought; Low Tunnels for Strawberries and Overwintering Onions; Emerging Diseases Management Update. Contact the Secretary, Lisa McKeag at 917-573-5558 or secretary@nevbga.org. To register, visit <https://goo.gl/dFZPXw>.
- **January 10 - February 28 - UMass Vegetable Winter School Offers Workshops for Farm Owners, Managers and Employees** - Brigham Hill Community Farm, 37 Wheeler Rd., Grafton. Vegetable Winter School is designed to provide growers with regulatory certainty in a time of many regulatory changes. Leave winter school ready for a Commonwealth Quality Program (CQP) audit and the peace of mind that you are prepared to handle the requirements of: the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), EPA Worker Protection Standards (WPS), Nutrient Management Regulations, and changes in Employment Law. Get up to date on research and IPM practices important to vegetable growers and gain a competitive advantage in a heavily regulated market. Each farm will get detailed support in developing food safety and nutrient management plans, training employees in WPS, developing standard operating procedures compliant with regulations, and preparing an employee handbook and a whole farm IPM plan. This course is designed for farm owners, managers and employees. [Details here.](#)
- **January 11 - UMass Extension - Greenhouse Management and Production for 2017** - 9:30am - 3:30 pm, Publick House, Sturbridge. Commercial growers of greenhouse crops are invited to learn about greenhouse management and production tips for the 2017 growing season. Topics and speakers will include: Light, Temperature and Relative Humidity in Greenhouses, Dr. Ryan Dickson University of New Hampshire; Irrigating Greenhouse Crops, Dr. Mandy Bayer, UMass Ext.; Greenhouse Plant Nutrition, Dr. Rosa Raudales, UMass CT Ext.; Alternatives to Neonicotinoids for Managing Pests in Greenhouses - Grower to Grower Panel with Kerri Stafford, Cavicchio Greenhouses and Amanda Gioacchini, Pioneer Gardens. [Details and registration.](#)
- **January 14 - NOFA Winter Conference** - Worcester State University. Annual one-day conference. Go deeper into your winter study sessions at the upcoming NOFA/MASS Winter Conference! Full program of adult, teen and children's courses will be just what you need to prepare for your next growing cycle! You can also discover more than 80 excellent vendors at the Trade Show where you can find tools, techniques and more information to support your study and take your project to the next level. Offer the best resources to find in Mass. to support your projects. Tap into the resources of more than 70 popular workshops and experts from the field on organic farming, gardening, landscaping, homesteading, DIY skill building and soil/human/animal health. [Complete registration and details here.](#)

For more ag-industry events and workshops, visit and bookmark www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/events.

For culinary and consumer events, click [here](#).

USDA News

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Preparing the Mail List for the 2017 Census of Agriculture – New Farmers Encouraged to Respond

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is preparing the mail list for the 2017 Census of Agriculture. The Census of Agriculture is the leading source of facts and figures about American agriculture. Conducted every five years, the Census provides a detailed picture of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. It is the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every state and county in the United States.

Your help is needed to make the 2017 Census of Agriculture as accurate as possible. A major challenge is having a list of farms that is as complete as possible, especially with so many new farmers. If you have never received a Census of Agriculture or survey questionnaire from NASS then NASS may not have you on their farm list. Please take a couple minutes and provide NASS your contact information at www.agcounts.usda.gov/cgi-bin/counts/.

Even if you do not think of yourself as a farmer or rancher, your operation is a farm if it meets the Census of Agriculture definition – an operation that sold or normally would have sold \$1,000 or more of agricultural products in a year. If you own or rent agricultural land, grow vegetables, grow horticultural or floricultural products, have fruit or nut trees, cattle, horses, poultry, hogs, bees, aquaculture products, or consider yourself a farmer or rancher, NASS wants to hear from you.

All individual information provided to NASS is confidential and only used for statistical purposes. In accordance with the Confidential Information Protection provisions of Title V, Subtitle A, Public Law 107-347 and other applicable Federal laws, your responses will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed in identifiable form to anyone other than employees or agents. By law, every employee and agent has taken an oath and is subject to jail term, fine, or both if he or she willfully discloses ANY identifiable information about you or your operation.

If you have previously received a Census of Agriculture or survey questionnaire from NASS then you will receive a 2017 Census of Agriculture questionnaire in late 2017/early 2018. Your cooperation is appreciated. For questions, please contact Gary R. Keough, 603-227-3129, Gary_Keough@nass.usda.gov.

USDA to Expand Targeted Conservation Effort for Wildlife on Farm and Forest Lands

New project to provide opportunities for landowners to restore, protect habitat for rare turtles. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is adding dozens of new target species to [Working Lands for Wildlife](#) (WLFW), the agency's targeted, science-based effort to help landowners restore and protect habitat for declining species on farms and working forests. NRCS provides technical and financial help to agricultural producers and forest land owners to plan and implement conservation practices that benefit these target species.

One of the new projects nationwide focuses on restoring and protecting wetland habitats for [Blandings, wood and spotted turtles](#) – all considered at-risk by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – in New England and New York. The turtles need a range of wetland and stream habitat.

Massachusetts landowners can help the turtles by restoring and protecting wetlands, managing healthy riparian areas and stream corridors, and improving grazing and forestry operations. NRCS staff will work with Bay State farmers, land owners and managers to restore wetlands and associated uplands on agricultural and forested lands that support these turtles. To learn how to apply, landowners should contact their local [USDA service center](#).

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MDAR's mission is to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions – Agricultural Conservation & Technical Assistance, Agricultural Markets, Animal Health, and Crop and Pest Services – MDAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the rich diversity of the Commonwealth's agricultural community to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health measures, and fulfill agriculture's role in energy conservation and production. For more information, visit MDAR's website at mass.gov/agr, and/or follow at twitter.com/MDARCommish.